# Psychotherapy notes

Therapeutic Psychology: Theory and Models (University of Johannesburg)

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# Psychoanalytic Therapy: Concepts, Techniques, and Applications

## Basic Psychoanalytic Concepts

1. **Freudian Theory**: Freud's psychoanalytic theory posits that human behaviour is influenced by irrational forces, unconscious motivations, and instinctual drives developed in early psychosexual stages.
2. **Key Concepts**:
    - **Human Nature**: Deterministic, driven by unconscious motivations and biological drives.
    - **Instincts**: Include life instincts (libido) and death instincts. Libido encompasses all life-sustaining drives, while death instincts involve aggressive and self-destructive tendencies.
3. **Structure of Personality**:
    - **Id**: The primitive, unconscious part of personality driven by the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification of desires.
    - **Ego**: Mediates between the id and reality, governed by the reality principle, engaging in rational thinking and planning.
    - **Superego**: Represents moral standards and ideals, striving for perfection and imposing guilt or pride.
4. **Consciousness and the Unconscious**:
    - **Unconscious**: Houses repressed memories, desires, and experiences, influencing behaviour despite being out of awareness.
    - **Consciousness**: A small part of the mind, akin to the tip of an iceberg, with the majority of mental processes occurring below the surface.
5. **Anxiety**:
    - **Reality Anxiety**: Fear of real external threats.
    - **Neurotic Anxiety**: Fear of internal impulses and their consequences.
    - **Moral Anxiety**: Fear of violating one's own moral standards.
6. **Ego-Defense Mechanisms**: These are unconscious strategies used by the ego to manage anxiety and protect the individual from distress:
    - **Repression**: Blocking out painful memories.
    - **Denial**: Ignoring reality.

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- **Reaction Formation**: Exhibiting opposite behaviours.
- **Projection**: Attributing one's own unacceptable feelings to others.
- **Displacement**: Redirecting impulses to a safer target.
- **Rationalization**: Justifying behaviours with logical reasons.
- **Sublimation**: Channelling impulses into socially acceptable activities.
- **Regression**: Reverting to earlier developmental stages.
- **Introjection**: Incorporating the values of others.
- **Identification**: Aligning with successful individuals or groups.
- **Compensation**: Covering perceived weaknesses with strengths.

7. **Development of Personality**:
    - **Psychosexual Stages**: Freud's stages of development from infancy through adulthood, where unresolved conflicts can lead to fixation and later psychological issues:
        - **Oral Stage**: Focus on oral pleasure; issues of trust and dependency.
        - **Anal Stage**: Focus on control and autonomy; issues with self-discipline.
        - **Phallic Stage**: Focus on sexuality and self-identification; issues with sexual identity and gender roles.

This summary should help in understanding the core components of Freudian psychoanalysis and its relevance to therapeutic practices. If you need any more details or have specific questions about these concepts, feel free to ask!

**The Therapeutic Process in Psychoanalytic Therapy**

**Therapeutic Goals**

In psychoanalytic therapy, the primary aim is to enhance clients' ability to cope with and resolve their own issues (McWilliams, 2014). The ultimate goal is to increase adaptive functioning by reducing symptoms and resolving internal conflicts (Wolitzky, 2011a). Central to Freudian psychoanalysis are two main goals:

1. **Making the Unconscious Conscious**: This involves bringing unconscious thoughts and feelings into awareness.
2. **Strengthening the Ego**: This aims to base behaviour more on reality and less on instinctual drives or irrational guilt.

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Successful psychoanalysis is believed to significantly modify the individual's personality and character structure. This is achieved by reconstructing, discussing, interpreting, and analysing childhood experiences to develop a deeper self-understanding. Insight is a key component, involving both intellectual understanding and the emotional experience associated with it.

**Therapist's Function and Role**

In classical psychoanalysis, therapists often adopt a neutral, non-judgmental stance known as the 'blank-screen' approach. They avoid self-disclosure to foster a transference relationship, where clients project onto them feelings and attitudes shaped by past experiences with significant figures (Safran, Kriss & Foley, 2019). This transference is essential for therapeutic work, as it helps in analysing unresolved issues.

Unlike classical psychoanalysis, contemporary relational perspectives reject complete neutrality and anonymity (McWilliams, 2014). Therapists aim to help clients achieve self-awareness, manage anxiety realistically, and gain control over impulsive behaviours. They must be empathetic and attuned to the client's intrapsychic world, paying close attention to resistances and using tactful interpretations to uncover unconscious material.

The therapeutic process involves interpreting both verbal and non-verbal cues, such as dreams and free associations. The goal is to help clients gain insight into their issues and develop better control over their lives. Effective psychoanalytic therapy requires a balance between timing and interpretation, ensuring clients are ready for changes.

**Client's Experience in Therapy**

Clients engaging in classical psychoanalysis typically commit to a long-term, intensive process. Initially, they may have face-to-face sessions with the analyst, but eventually, they lie on a couch and engage in free association, reporting their thoughts without censorship. This setup encourages deep, uncensored reflection and fosters the transference relationship by minimizing external stimuli and preventing clients from reading the therapist's reactions.

During therapy, clients are free to express any thought or feeling, which helps loosen defence mechanisms and encourages therapeutic growth. The therapist's role is to maintain a consistent, non-judgmental presence, making every intervention purposeful

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for client progress. This safe setting allows clients to explore unresolved issues and make lasting changes.

**Psychoanalytic Therapy vs. Psychodynamic Therapy**

Psychodynamic therapy, a shortened and simplified form of classical psychoanalysis, retains many core elements but with less rigidity. It involves fewer sessions per week and may not adhere strictly to classical techniques, though it still addresses transference, dreams, defences, and unconscious material. Psychodynamic therapists may provide more supportive interventions compared to traditional psychoanalysts (Wolitzky, 2011a).

**Termination of Therapy**

Termination in psychoanalytic therapy occurs when clients and therapists agree that the main therapeutic goals have been achieved. Criteria for termination include resolving core conflicts, achieving insight into past problems, and integrating this awareness into present relationships. Termination often brings up intense feelings of attachment and loss, necessitating careful discussion and reflection on the progress made (Curtis & Hirsch, 2011).

**Relationship Between Therapist and Client**

The therapeutic relationship in classical analysis involves the therapist maintaining an objective stance, while contemporary relational analysis focuses on the here-and-now interactions between client and therapist. Contemporary therapists view emotional communication as crucial for understanding and connecting with clients. This approach considers both transference and countertransference as central to the therapeutic process, helping clients understand and resolve past issues by examining how they are relived in the present relationship (Safran et al., 2019).

**Key Terms:**

- **Transference**: The client's unconscious projection of feelings from past significant relationships onto the therapist.
- **Countertransference**: The therapist's emotional responses to the client's transference.

These concepts are essential in understanding how past experiences shape current perceptions and relationships, making them central to the psychodynamic approach.

1. **Free Association**:

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- **Definition**: A primary technique where clients are encouraged to verbalize any thoughts, feelings, or memories that come to mind, without any filtering or censorship. This method aims to bypass the client's usual defences and access unconscious material.
- **Purpose**: To uncover hidden emotions, desires, and conflicts that are repressed in the unconscious. Through this process, therapists can identify patterns and connections that reveal underlying issues.
- **Therapist's Role**: The therapist listens for significant themes or disruptions in the client's associations, which may indicate areas of resistance or anxiety. The therapist then interprets these insights to help the client gain understanding and resolve unconscious conflicts.

2. **Working Through**:
   - **Definition**: A process of addressing and resolving core conflicts through repeated exploration and interpretation. This involves revisiting and examining recurring themes and resistances in the client's relationship with the therapist.
   - **Purpose**: To help clients work through unresolved conflicts and integrate new insights into their daily lives. It involves reinforcing interpretations and addressing resistance to facilitate deeper understanding and change.
   - **Therapist's Role**: The therapist guides the client through these repetitive themes and conflicts, helping them to understand and resolve the issues that emerge through their therapeutic relationship.
3. **Countertransference**:
   - **Definition**: The therapist's emotional responses to the client, which are influenced by the therapist's own unconscious conflicts and past experiences. This can affect the therapist's objectivity and interactions with the client.
   - **Purpose**: To recognize and manage these emotional responses to avoid letting them interfere with the therapeutic process. Awareness of countertransference can help therapists gain insights into the client's dynamics and enhance the therapeutic relationship.

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- **Therapist's Role**: The therapist must remain aware of their own reactions and manage them appropriately to maintain therapeutic neutrality and effectiveness.

4. **Interpretation**:
    - **Definition**: The process by which the therapist points out and explains the meanings behind the client's behaviours, thoughts, dreams, and resistances. Interpretations aim to help clients understand their unconscious processes and gain insight.
    - **Purpose**: To facilitate the assimilation of new material, speed up the uncovering of unconscious material, and help clients understand the underlying reasons for their behaviours and feelings.
    - **Therapist's Role**: The therapist assesses the client's readiness for interpretations and provides them in a collaborative manner, ensuring they are well-timed and accessible to the client's current level of awareness.
5. **Dream Analysis**:
    - **Definition**: A technique used to explore the unconscious content revealed in dreams. Dreams are seen as a way to access repressed thoughts and desires.
    - **Purpose**: To uncover latent content (hidden motives and fears) that is disguised in dreams as manifest content (the literal storyline of the dream). Understanding dreams helps in revealing and addressing unconscious conflicts.
    - **Therapist's Role**: The therapist helps the client to freely associate to elements of the dream and interprets the symbols and meanings to provide insights into the client's unconscious struggles.
6. **Resistance**:
    - **Definition**: Any behaviour or attitude that obstructs the progress of therapy by preventing the client from accessing and discussing repressed material. This includes reluctance or avoidance in addressing certain topics.

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- **Purpose**: To identify and explore the defensive mechanisms that protect the client from anxiety and pain associated with unconscious material. Understanding resistance helps in overcoming obstacles to therapeutic progress.
- **Therapist's Role**: The therapist must recognize and address resistances in a way that respects the client's defensive processes, using them as a valuable tool to gain insight into the client's internal conflicts.

7. **Transference**:
   - **Definition**: The projection of feelings, desires, and expectations from past relationships onto the therapist. This phenomenon provides a way to re-experience and understand unresolved issues from earlier relationships.
   - **Purpose**: To use the transference relationship to explore and resolve old conflicts that are being replayed in the therapeutic setting. This can lead to increased self-awareness and change in interpersonal patterns.
   - **Therapist's Role**: The therapist analyses and interprets transference reactions to help clients understand how their past influences their current relationships and behaviours, facilitating emotional growth and change.
8. **Application to Group Counselling**:
   - **Definition**: Applying psychoanalytic concepts to group therapy settings, where group dynamics can reveal individual members' unconscious conflicts and relational patterns.
   - **Purpose**: To understand how past experiences affect present group interactions and to use group dynamics to explore transference, countertransference, and resistance within the group setting.
   - **Therapist's Role**: The group therapist observes and interprets group interactions, uses insights from transference and countertransference to understand and address group issues, and manages their own reactions to avoid interfering with the group's therapeutic process.

**Psychoanalytic Therapy from a Multicultural Perspective**

**Strengths from a Diversity Perspective**

1. **Adaptability to Cultural Contexts**:

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- Psychoanalytic therapy can be adapted to fit culturally diverse settings by modifying techniques to respect and incorporate cultural values. Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages, which address critical developmental issues, can be particularly useful. Erikson's work highlights how social and cultural factors influence development across different cultures (Sharf, 2016). This allows therapists to consider how life events have shaped clients' experiences and responses according to their cultural context.

2. **Understanding Developmental Crises**:
    - The emphasis on developmental stages can be beneficial in exploring how critical life events impact clients. By reviewing environmental situations and turning points, therapists can gain insights into how cultural and social factors have influenced the client's development and current issues.

**Shortcomings from a Diversity Perspective**

1. **Cost and Accessibility**:
    - Traditional psychoanalytic therapy is often expensive, which can limit access for clients from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The cost barrier may prevent individuals from seeking therapy, making it less accessible for diverse populations.
2. **Cultural Misalignment**:
    - Psychoanalytic therapy traditionally reflects upper- and middle-class values, which may not align with the values of all clients. For instance, clients from cultures that value directive and structured approaches may find the often unstructured, exploratory nature of psychoanalysis challenging. This misalignment can lead to dissatisfaction or discontinuation of therapy.
3. **Conceptual Differences**:
    - The emphasis on intrapsychic analysis may clash with cultural perspectives that focus more on social frameworks and community-based approaches. For example, psychoanalytic concepts like the

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Oedipus complex may have limited relevance in cultural contexts with different kinship systems.

4. **South African Context**:
    - In South Africa, psychoanalytic practices may face challenges due to their historical association with white, middle-class, and individualistic values, which may not resonate with the broader, more diverse population (Smith, 2014; Swartz, 2007). The theoretical framework may appear disconnected from the lived experiences and social realities of many South Africans.
5. **Social Justice Concerns**:
    - Psychoanalytic therapy can be critiqued for not adequately addressing external social, cultural, and political factors that contribute to a client's issues. This focus on internal dynamics might overlook the impact of systemic oppression or social injustice on mental health, potentially leading clients to feel blamed for their problems without recognizing external contributing factors.
6. **Short-Term vs. Long-Term Focus**:
    - Psychoanalytic therapy's long-term focus on personality reconstruction may not align with the needs of clients facing immediate, practical issues. Low-income clients or those in crisis may seek quicker, more pragmatic solutions to pressing problems like housing or employment.

**Application to the Case of Stan**

**Stan's Psychoanalytic Case Analysis**:

1. **Unconscious Psychodynamics**:
    - Stan's issues are explored through the lens of unconscious psychodynamics. His self-destructive behaviours, such as alcohol abuse, are analysed as manifestations of repressed conflicts. The approach posits that his difficulties with gender roles and relationships stem from unresolved early experiences with his parents.
2. **Transference**:
    - Stan's relationship with his therapist may mirror his relationships with his parents, particularly his father. This transference provides a means to

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explore and understand his difficulties in relationships. By examining these patterns, Stan can gain insight into his current issues.

3. **Object-Relations Perspective**:
    - From an object-relations perspective, Stan's behaviour is seen as a repetition of earlier developmental stages, particularly his dependency issues and unresolved separation-individuation tasks. His struggles with self-worth and independence are viewed as unresolved conflicts from infancy.
4. **Self-Psychology**:
    - Self-psychology focuses on Stan's difficulties in forming intimate relationships and his ongoing dependency needs. This perspective helps understand how his early experiences with his mother may influence his current relational patterns.

**Questions for Reflection**:

1. **Interest in Early Childhood**:
    - Explore Stan's early childhood to identify patterns and connections between his early experiences and current issues. Techniques could include analysing memories and examining how early relationships shape present behaviours.
2. **Transference Reactions**:
    - Consider how Stan's transference might impact your role as a therapist. Reflect on how you would manage being idealized or criticized by Stan and how this could affect the therapeutic relationship.
3. **Countertransference Issues**:
    - Be aware of potential countertransference reactions. How might Stan's projections or behaviours affect your own feelings and responses?
4. **Resistance and Defences**:
    - Predict possible resistances and defences Stan might exhibit. Interpret and address these resistances to facilitate therapeutic progress.
5. **Preferred Psychoanalytic Form**:

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- Decide which form of psychoanalytic therapy (classical, relational, or object-relations) would be most appropriate for working with Stan based on his issues and therapeutic needs.

This detailed perspective provides a nuanced understanding of how psychoanalytic therapy interacts with cultural diversity and practical application, particularly through the case of Stan.

## Existential Therapy: Concepts, Techniques, and Applications

### Existential Therapy Insights

**Respecting Clients' Purposes** In existential therapy, it's crucial to align with the client's purpose for seeking therapy. By understanding their goals and aspirations, therapists can help clients explore and understand their life choices and consequences. Despite external limitations, individuals retain the power to shape their perceptions and actions. Therapy involves helping clients recognize their agency in changing their situations, even if external factors are beyond their control.

**Striving for Identity and Relationships** Existential therapy emphasizes the struggle to form and maintain a personal identity while also seeking meaningful connections with others. It highlights the tension between individual uniqueness and the desire for relational ties. Many individuals become entangled in societal expectations, losing touch with their authentic selves. The therapeutic process challenges clients to reclaim their individuality and explore their genuine desires.

**The Courage to Be** Paul Tillich's concept of "The Courage to Be" involves facing the anxiety associated with our existential concerns, such as death and meaninglessness. Clients often fear discovering a lack of intrinsic self, feeling they are mere reflections of others' expectations. Therapy aims to help clients confront these fears and develop a meaningful sense of self. By facing these existential anxieties, clients can grow and find personal significance.

**Experience of Aloneness and Relatedness** Existentialists propose that solitude is a fundamental aspect of human existence. Recognizing our aloneness helps us find our sense of meaning and purpose. Building a relationship with oneself is essential before forming fulfilling relationships with others. Existential therapy helps clients distinguish

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between dependent and life-affirming relationships, aiming to foster mature and balanced connections.

**Struggling with Identity** Therapists assist clients in examining how they may have lost touch with their true identity due to external influences. The therapeutic journey involves confronting the fear of rediscovering oneself and reclaiming personal freedom. Therapy challenges clients to explore how they have allowed others to shape their identities and to take responsibility for creating their own path.

**Search for Meaning** Existential therapy addresses the quest for personal significance and purpose. Clients often struggle with existential questions about their purpose and direction in life. Therapy helps clients examine their values and seek new sources of meaning. Logotherapy, developed by Viktor Frankl, facilitates this exploration, encouraging clients to find meaning through their engagement with valued aspects of life.

**Anxiety as a Condition of Living** Existential anxiety arises from confronting life's inherent uncertainties, such as mortality and freedom. This type of anxiety is viewed as a potential catalyst for growth and change. Normal anxiety, related to existential concerns, can motivate personal development, whereas neurotic anxiety is disproportionate and immobilizing. Therapy focuses on helping clients manage anxiety constructively and use it as a tool for self-improvement.

**Awareness of Death and Nonbeing** Understanding and accepting the reality of death is a key aspect of existential therapy. Awareness of mortality can enhance the appreciation of life and motivate meaningful living. Rather than avoiding the topic, therapists encourage clients to confront their fear of death. This confrontation can lead to a more authentic and purposeful existence, as clients reassess their values and actions in light of their finite nature.

These concepts from existential therapy provide a framework for addressing the profound questions and challenges that clients face. The approach encourages clients to explore their existence deeply, confront fears, and seek meaning and authenticity in their lives.

**Existential Therapy: Core Concepts and Application**

**Therapeutic Goals**

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Existential therapy emphasizes personal responsibility and authenticity. It invites clients to confront and embrace their own freedom, recognizing that true freedom comes with the responsibility for their choices and actions. The ultimate aim is to help clients live more authentically and meaningfully, by acknowledging and facing their existential anxieties (Deurzen, 2012). According to Schneider and Krug (2017), the four primary goals of existential-humanistic therapy are:

1. **Increasing Presence:** Helping clients become more present with themselves and others.
2. **Identifying Barriers:** Assisting clients in recognizing how they obstruct their own presence.
3. **Assuming Responsibility:** Encouraging clients to take charge of designing their current lives.
4. **Expanding Existence:** Inspiring clients to explore and adopt broader ways of being.

Increased awareness is central to existential therapy, enabling clients to see new possibilities and make meaningful changes in their lives.

**Therapist's Function and Role**

Existential therapists focus on understanding clients' subjective experiences and encouraging them to accept personal responsibility. Clients who engage in existential therapy may have a restricted awareness of their own problems, feeling trapped and helpless. The therapist's role is to help clients confront these limitations and explore how their past and present circumstances have shaped their current situation (Bugental, 1997). The therapeutic relationship itself is crucial, with an emphasis on authenticity, respect, and presence (Yalom & Josselson, 2019).

Existential therapists avoid rigid techniques and instead adapt their approach to the unique needs of each client, often drawing on diverse theoretical orientations. The therapeutic process is seen as a collaborative journey, where both therapist and client explore and reflect on existential concerns together (Russell, 2007; Elkins, 2007, 2016).

**Clients' Experience in Therapy**

Clients in existential therapy are encouraged to assume responsibility for their lives and take action based on their newfound insights. The therapy process involves confronting fears, guilt, and anxieties, and actively experimenting with new ways of living outside of

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therapy sessions (Deurzen, 2010). The experience of therapy can be intense, involving a mix of fear, excitement, and self-discovery as clients explore their own limitations and potential for growth (May, 1981; Deurzen, 2010).

**Relationship Between Therapist and Client**

The therapeutic relationship in existential therapy is based on mutual respect and genuine interaction. Existential therapists strive to be authentic and present, fostering a deep and meaningful connection with clients. This relationship is central to the therapeutic process and is considered a key factor in facilitating positive change (Buber, 1970; Craig et al., 2016).

**Application: Therapeutic Techniques and Procedures**

Existential therapy is not focused on specific techniques but rather on understanding and exploring the client's subjective reality. Therapists may use various techniques from other therapeutic models but always within the context of existential exploration. The emphasis is on creating a genuine, collaborative encounter between therapist and client, rather than applying pre-defined techniques (Vontress, 2013; Deurzen, 2002).

**Phases of Existential Counselling**

1. **Initial Phase:** Clients identify and question their assumptions about life, values, and beliefs. This phase involves examining how clients perceive and interpret their existence.
2. **Middle Phase:** Clients explore and possibly restructure their values and attitudes. This phase aims at gaining clarity about what constitutes a meaningful life.
3. **Final Phase:** The focus shifts to implementing the insights gained in therapy into real-life actions and behaviours, promoting a more purposeful and authentic way of living (Deurzen, 2002).

**Clients Appropriate for Existential Counselling**

Existential therapy is suitable for individuals facing developmental crises, grief, loss, or major life decisions. It is especially effective for those at crossroads in life, experiencing existential angst, or seeking deeper meaning and authenticity (Schneider, 2011; Deurzen, 2002).

**Application to Brief Therapy and Group Counselling**

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Existential therapy can be adapted for brief therapy by focusing on specific issues and setting clear, achievable goals. In group counselling, existential principles help members explore universal themes and interpersonal dynamics, promoting self-discovery and authentic connections (Sharp & Bugental, 2001; Leszcz, 2015). Existential therapy provides a flexible and profound approach to addressing the fundamental concerns of human existence, encouraging clients to live more authentic and meaningful lives.

**Strengths from a Multicultural Perspective**

1. **Broad Perspective and Universality**
    - **Flexibility**: Existential therapy's non-prescriptive nature allows it to be highly relevant in diverse cultural contexts (Deurzen, 2012).
    - **Universal Human Issues**: Focuses on fundamental human experiences such as love, anxiety, suffering, and death, which transcend cultural boundaries (Vontress et al., 1999).
2. **Focus on Subjective Experience**
    - **Phenomenology**: Emphasizes understanding clients' subjective experiences, which is crucial for addressing culturally specific issues (Schneider, 2008; Schneider & Krug, 2017).
3. **Recognition of Commonalities**
    - **Commonalities vs. Differences**: Encourages counsellors to focus initially on universal human experiences, fostering a deeper connection with clients from diverse backgrounds (Vontress, 2013).
4. **International Appeal**
    - **Global Reach**: Existential therapy has international interest and application, as seen in various countries and through international conferences and online courses. This widespread appeal indicates its adaptability and relevance across cultures.

**Shortcomings from a Diversity Perspective**

1. **Individualistic Focus**
    - **Criticism**: Existential therapy may be criticized for being too individualistic and not sufficiently addressing systemic and social factors affecting clients (Schneider, 2011).

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2. **Perceived Powerlessness**
    - **Client Perspective**: Clients from marginalized backgrounds might feel that existential therapy's focus on self-determination overlooks external barriers like racism and discrimination. They might experience frustration if their immediate social realities are not addressed.
3. **Cultural Context and Self-Determination**
    - **Cultural Relevance**: The existential focus on self-determination might not fully account for cultural contexts where self and identity are closely linked with social networks and environmental conditions.
4. **Structured Approach Expectations**
    - **Client Expectations**: Clients accustomed to structured, problem-oriented approaches might find the existential approach lacking in concrete direction and practical solutions.

**Integration into Practice**

- **Existential-Integrative Models**: Some practitioners are developing integrative models that combine existential therapy with an awareness of social and systemic issues, aiming to address both individual and societal factors (Schneider, 2008).
- **Concrete Direction**: Counsellors using an existential approach should balance philosophical exploration with practical strategies to meet clients' needs for concrete solutions.

This structured approach will help you clearly articulate both the strengths and challenges of existential therapy when applied in multicultural contexts during your test.

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